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ABSTRACT

A discussion of the situation of Idoma, a Nigerian language, begins with different accounts of the language's origin, referring to both local legend and cosmology. It then proceeds to a review of modern linguists' efforts, since 1927, to classify the language. A statistical overview contains information on the number of speakers of Idoma as a first language, bilingual and multilingual speakers, varieties within the language, and structural and functional relationships between varieties. The history of Idoma documentation is included here and phonology and alphabet are outlined. Subsequent sections discuss: government policy concerning language use and choice of language for administrative purposes at local, regional, and national levels, within political and policy-making agencies or functions, in health services, and in the judiciary system; use of Idoma as a medium of instruction, as an academic subject, and in teacher education; the role of the language in research and academic pursuits; Idoma in religious denominations and religion-related services; English, Idoma, and other languages in trade and industry; maintenance of Idoma cultural life and arts, including publications; language choice for television and radio, sports and leisure, local markets and domestic service, and family and friendship networks; and language attitudes and stereotypes. (MSE)

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PROFILE OF THE LANGUAGE SITUATION: IDOMA

CONTRIBUTION TO LANGUAGES IN CONTACT AND CONFLICT IN AFRICA (LICCA): NIGERIA WORKING GROUP

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Professor Kay Williamson, in her Inaugural lecture entitled, "The Pedigree of Nations" had traced a "Similarity of language to common origin of people". She was re-echoing the position espoused by Dr. Samuel Johnson in 1773.

> there is no taking the connection of ancient nations, but by language.(BOSWELL, 1785 quoted in Williamson, 1987 pp19-20.)

In simple terms, the logic of the argument is as follows: the geographical spread of a language can be studied in conjunction with its family tree to determine the homeland of the speakers of the proto-language (Sapir, 1916; Dyen, 1956; Greenberg 1963; and Ballard, 1971). Applied to Idoma, the name Idoma refers both to the area (or homeland of speakers of proto-Idoma, called Idomaland), the people and the language.

This chapter hopes to present the stage of the art on our knowledge of Idoma language.

Thanks to the historian, Dr. Paul Hair (1962), we now know that Fourah Bay in Freetown served as the Centre for the study of West African languages between 1800-1880; similarly Gabriel Manessy has documented the efforts made at Dakar University in Senegal on Wolof. "The most monumental work to emerge from Fourah Bay was that of S.W. Koelle, a German missionary". However, the first outstanding work from Fourah Bay which has bearing on our discussion - Idoma - was that by Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther in 1854.

In 1854, he joined another expedition up the Niger and Benue led by Dr. William Baikie (the first was in the company of J.F. Schon in 1951). On this latter expedition, Crowther "took (and later published) excellent word lists of Tiv and of one of the Arago dialects of Idoma" (Armstrong 1964:3). Significant efforts were made on Idoma and other West African languages. These resulted in the fair number of empirically based scholarly publications during this period. However, the study of West African languages (Africanist

Linguistics) suffered from the excesses of the slave trade - particularly from racist cultural and linguistic stereotype during this era.

> ....Modern Idoma ethnicity is the result of a slow historical process which mirrors the historical experiences of the diverse ethnic groups, which, in a series of inter-connected events, have contributed to the emergence of a unique Idoma culture (Erim 1981:x).

A variety of links existed in the pre-colonial period between the peoples of the Benue Valley (i.e. the principalities today known as "Village size chiefdoms" or "segmentary societies"): Igbirra, Igala, Epe, Igede, Idoma and the loosely associated Alago communities of the lower Benue valley; between Kwararafa and the Igbo communities to the east of the Niger; between Benin and the Yorubas; and between Ogoja and the Upper Cross River. Consequently, in trying to trace the origins of Idoma ethnicity we must look to the ancient Benin Kingdom, the Kwararafa confederacy and the Yoruba Kingdom. Herein may lie the myths of origin.

The Idoma who number about 780,000 people (1992 Census figures) occupy areas of land within the broad valley of the Benue River and the Cross River basin. The main thrust of territory extends from the River Benue to the northern fringes of Igboland: 208km from North to South and 48km from east to West; from South of the River Benue, it extends 72km East of the confluence with the Niger. The Idoma are one of the Confluence Nigerians.

2.1 MYTHS OF ORIGIN

Early history (Pre-colonial history) of Idoma reveals that "the heterogenous groups known collectively as Idoma today did not have a common ethnic/linguistic identity prior to the advent of the British. That is, before c. 1600 AD".

2.1.1. The 'Akpoto' Phenomenon

One popular legend which attempts to trace the historical origin of Idoma peoples is the view which refers to the Idoma as AKPOTO. In 1854, an alien traveller, chronicler and anthropologist, Crowther published an account in which he claimed that the area south and east of the confluence belonged to the Akpoto originally. Later, according to this account, the Attah of Idah on the Niger, was requested for a piece of land by the Yoruba king, himself from Nupe. The Attah entreated the Akpoto king who acquiesced. The Yoruba king wielding enough power was to later dispossess the Akpoto of their land. The Akpoto subsequently migrated to Ankpa Division.

The Akpoto originally owned most of the territory today occupied by the Tiv, Igala and Idoma. They are the progenitors of the Idoma over whom the Yoruba king imposed his rule. This view may explain why the Idoma are sometimes referred to as the "Akpoto". They however strenuously reject this appelage as derogatory. However, a settlement going by that name is extant to this date - lying between Ankpa and Idoma land. The people are bi-lingual in Idoma and Igala. Idoma ancestral Masquerade (Alekwu) chants in Akpoto language.

There appears no question that an early sub-stratum of modern Igala, Idoma, Igede were at one time Akpoto. Evidence for this position derives both from linguistic (language similarity) and history (nature of their migrations).

2.1.2. The Igala connection

Another account of Idoma origin is encapsulated in the following lines, taken from a funeral dirge chanted twice daily (dawn and dusk) for 7 or 14 days after the burial of an elderly person. For a man, it is chanted by the ancestral Alekwu masquerade; for a woman,

by a group of women.

a. Ojilima, ada-alo .. labahi kpo nm egaligbo nm' Idah ge wa. (With Honour, our forebears have brought gifts from Idah).

First, in Idoma cosmology Idah represents the ends of the earth - the fartherest parts of the universe. Second, and more appropriately Idoma chiefs (Och' Idoma) are always crowned in Idah by the Attah. This is the "gifts" (of Honour) referred to in the song, the chorus enjoins all to join in the song of praise in honour of the priceless gift (the crown) which "our forefathers have brought from Idah", the kingdom of the Attah of Igala.

The ancestral masquerade always begins the funeral rites by tracing the descent (pedigree) of the deceased. Such genealogy always includes the myth of origin of the Idoma. It ends typically with the proclamation:

> Alo Idoma, alo nm' Idah (We, the Idoma i.e. children of Idu, son of Oma, originate from Idah).

It is unthinkable for a renowned masquerade performer to be unaware of this link; and it spells doom for him to miss any link in the chain in the genealogy. This descent is patrilinearly traced. A good raconteur is applauded.

There are two versions of myth of origin. One, the Igala connection; two, the Apa (Kwararafa) connection/derivation.

> "There can be no doubt that linguists have an important role to play in classifying the emergence of the ethnic identity called Idoma .... the Idoma language expanded over time by adoption.

> It seems possible that the original native speakers of that language once lived within the ancient Kwararafa Confederacy C. 1500. During the 3rd decade of the next century, those speakers... abandoned that homeland. It is possible that the proto - Idoma, which left Kwararafa at this time were those who today speak the "Central dialect" in Idoma Division. The other 8 dialectical groups may well represent the non-Idoma people who, for unexplained reasons, adopted the language and certain cultural traits of the Idoma. Possibly this explains the present dialectal differences between the "Idoma speaking peoples" better than separation and distance (Erim 1981:7-8)

The reason why the "Idoma speaking peoples" abandoned that homeland" in "ancient Kwararafa Confederacy" was the Efu Onya (the war fought by mounted Infantry on horseback). The Idoma-speaking peoples originated from Idah according to one myth of origin. Together with the Igala, Igbira, their proto-type who were the Akpoto - at one time were infiltrated by and ruled by the Yoruba. The other view is that the Idoma as a homogenous cultural and linguistic group originated in Kwararafa. So did the Igala and Igbira. For some reason buried in history, there was a dispersal (diaspora) of these groups. The Idoma first settled at Abinsi (24km along the Makurdi - Gboko road) and finally at their present location. They were joined by other Idomoid speaking groups e.g. the Igede, the Akpa, the Utonkon, Akweya, Yala and Doma peoples. The term Idoma is preferred as a reference cover term for the people who inhabit Idoma Division and speakers of Idoma language who live outside this geographical expanse of territory. Finally, Idoma is a family of languages, hence the term Idomoid is preferred (cf Armstrong).

The Idoma see themselves as descending from a putative founder - Idu son of Oma (hence, the acronym Idoma). In spite of arguments by Erim, Idu must have been a historical figure - the founder of the tribe / group.

3. Profile of the language situation.

One of the first generation of linguistic scholars involved in the classification of West African Languages was Diedrich Westerman, a German. In 1927 he isolated a phylum which he referred to as Western Sudanic and distinguished 6 sub-branches: (1) West Atlantic (2) Mandingo (3) Gur (4) kwa (5) Togo Remnant (6) Benue Cross.

The next milestone was by Joseph Greenberg, an American. His series of articles (1949-54) were collected in a book form in 1955 (revised 1963). In these he classified all mainland African Languages into 4 major families: (1) Khoisan (2) Nilo-Sahara (3) Afroasiatic (4) Niger-Kordofanian. Initially, Nigeri-Kordofanian was called Niger-Congo; he distinguished 6 branches in the family.

In 1977, Patrick Bennet, an American and Jan Sterk, a Belgian radically revised Greenberg's classification. More germaine for our present purposes is their recommendations regarding nomenclature and terminology. As Prof. Kay Williamson (1987, Inaugural) reports of such radical reforms:

> names for more closely - related groups avoid geographical names that have been used at a higher level and instead use the suffix - oid which was introduced by Greenberg in the term Bantoid to mean 'the group of languages which includes Bantu' and in jukunoid to mean the group of languages which includes Jukun'. Elugbe (1979) introduced Edoid, Akinkugbe (1980) introduced Yoruboid, and Armstrong (1981) Idomoid, for the groups which include Edo, Yoruba, and Idoma respectively.

What this suggests is that Idoma is a member of a group of languages - a language cluster (referred to as IDOMOID). This cluster includes Yala (in Ogoja), Akweya and Doma (in Plateau State), and Idoma, Igede, Akpa and Ufia (in Benue state). These must be kept apart from dialects of each of the members of this group.

Elugbe (1992) classifies Idomoid among Benue - Congo locating it in the confluence

area. He suggests that the Idoma and Igala together pushed the Igbo and Yoruba southeastwards from the confluence. He cites linguistic evidence and oral tradition to support his claim (p. 26). This means that the Idoma are amongst the confluence Nigerians.

Armstrong (1964) lists Idoma among the Kwa languages. Both Greenberg's schema and Westermann's (earlier works which predate him) have same classification. The West African Languages Survey has a list of 63 Kwa languages. The Kwa languages, according to Greenberg extend "along the Guinea Coast from Liberia to the Cross River of Nigeria and inland for about 200 miles" (p.10).

To Greenberg, "it is characteristic of this whole area that these languages, though genetically related, are deeply divided from each other qualitatively. Westermann thinks that of the sub-families listed, apart from Mande group, the Gur, Kwa and Benue-Cross (Greenberg's Benue-Congo) cluster together - into language families e.g. Idomoid.

Using the approach popular in glottochronology and linguistics - using extensive word-lists of roughly 130% of time-depth, Armstrong found affinities between Oyo Yoruba and Yala, the Idoma dialect spoken in Ogoja. He found that the vocabularies involved in both languages show no perceptible change (p. 12). This has led him to conclude that these languages are conservative.

3.1 Statistical Overview

3.1.1 Number of L1 Speakers, Varieties within L1, Structural and Functional relationships between Varieties.

According to the 1992 census, there are approximately 780,000 speakers of Idoma as first language or mother tongue. This figure is still being contested. For one thing,

following petitions to the National Population Commission (organisers of the nation-wide head count in 1992) a re-count has been ordered for Okpokwu Local Government Area - "the most densely populated municipal council in Idomaland". This was the verdict handed down by the High Court charged with the responsibility to hear such petitions. For another, the 1992 figures have been disputed nation wide (cf the Resolutions of the Lagos, Oyo and Osun Houses of Assembly during the Babangida regime following the release of the census figures). Moreover, language questions are hardly even asked during census in Nigeria, for fear of politicizing the issue. Finally, the World Bank Survey of Benue State puts the population of Idoma at over one million (Indeed Brann list Idoma among his millionaires - defined as languages spoken by 1m people).

Idoma is both a language cluster and dialect cluster. It is no wonder that Armstrong(1983) refers to it as "Idomoid".

a) Language cluster within Idomoid

i) Doma spoken in Lafia, Nassarrawa Eggon and Nassarrawa Toto (in Plateau state).

ii) Yala of Ogoja Division (Cross Rivers State)

iii) Idoma

iv) Igedde

v) Akpa

vi) Ufia (or Utonkon)

vii) Akweya in Lafia Division of Plateau state an example of which is Keana (or Eastern Arago/Alago)

Note

(iii) - (vi) are spoken in Benue State,

while (viii) is spoken in Kogi State in

Ankpa Division.

b) Dialect cluster

Within Idoma, the following varieties are spoken:

(i) Western Idoma dialect - spoken in Edumoga, Otukpa,

Owukpa and Orakam.

(ii) Central Idoma - spoken in Otukpo, Ugboju, Adoka,

Onyagedde, Agadagba, Oglekwu and

Ochobo.

(iii) Southern Idoma - spoken in Igumale, Ijigban, Ete and Agila.

Within Akweya, the following varieties are found:

(iv) Eastern Arago (also known as Keana)

(v) Western Arago - spoken in Nassarrawa Egon.

Within Doma, the varieties include:

Agatu, Nassarrawa Toto.

In the dialect classification above, I have deliberately avoided the use of geographical or regional nomenclature. Thus, within Idoma I have distinguished Central, Southern and Western dialects rather than Otukpo, Igumale and Otukpa - which are more restricted in terms of the spread of these varieties. Besides, it avoids the term 'standard' dialect which is often associated with Otukpo dialect, for obvious sociolinguistic reasons.

3.1.2 Number of L2 Speakers

No figures are available on this for now. Speakers within Idomoid (Ufia, Yala, Akweya, Doma, Akpoto, Igedde and Akpa) speak Idoma as L2. However, Idoma people do not necessarily speak any of these languages.

3.1.3 Incidence of bi-and multi-lingualism

a) Igedde, Akpa and Ufia speakers are bi-lingual in Idoma and their L1 (Igedde, Akpa and Ufia respectively).

b) Akpoto are bi-lingual in Idoma and Igala

c(Akweya are bi-lingual in Hausa and Arago (e.g. Keana/Eastern Arago or Eggon/Western Arago).

d) Doma are bi-lingual in Agatu dialect of Idoma and Hausa.

e) Western Idoma are bi-lingual in that dialect of Idoma and Igbo (the Nsukka dialect of Igbo).

f) Non-educated central Idoma are generally monolingual, while their educated counterparts are bi-lingual in Idoma and English.

3.2 Sociolinguistic Status

This section has benefitted immensely from the works of Armstrong (n.d.) entitled "Idoma Orthography". What I present here attempts to summarize a section of that work.

3.2.1 Degree of Standardization.

The first thing to appear in print in Idoma is John Clarke's (1848) *Specimens of Dialects* published by Berawick-upon-Tweed pp. 10-11, Number 149. It was re-printed in 1972 with a commentary by E. and S. Ardener (Greg International Publishers Ltd).

Professor Ardener identifies the subject/speaker to be Wm. Scott, a sawyer and a settler in Fernando Po "from Doma country" (See Doma language in Plateau State), whom Clarke knew in 1841. Prof. Armstrong thinks that the specimen is of the Western dialect of Idoma. S.W. Kooelle's *Polyglotta Africana* (1854) is the first substantial (in the sense of an empirically based scholarly publication) account of Idoma - 300 words of Yala of Ogoja (Clarke's were nine words). As Armstrong has noted, though a fine scholar, Koelle was not a linguist let alone a phonetician. In 1854 Samuel Ajayi Crowther (later bishop) accompanied Dr. William Baikie on an expedition up the River Benue to Garoua, and collected a list of Doma words. These he printed in *Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers... in 1854* (1855).

From the view point of orthographic development, the first milestone can be traced in the early 1920s. Following the completion of a railway line, a Methodist Mission and a school were established at Igumale. Mr. Norcross, a Reverend gentleman working with that mission produced a translation of the *Gospel of Mark* and *The Acts of the Apostles* in addition to a primer and a hymnal in Igumale (or Souther dialect). Norcross too was not a linguist; he followed the Igbo spelling system: [ɛ] *as* e, [ɔ *as* o[ŋ] *as* $\overline{n}^{x}$

In the words of Armstrong, Norcross modelled his spelling on English and paid no attention to vowel doubling (diphthongs) and tripling (triphthong) and tone system.

The next advance was recorded by the Catholic Mission which adopted a phenetic script: [ɛ] *for* e *and* [ɔ] *for* o. This because some controversy between the two Missions - Roman Catholic and Methodist. In 1923, Mr. A.S. Judd, a missionary published a short description of Keana (or eastern Arago dialect). Titled "Notes on the Language of

the Arago or Alago Tribe of Nigeria", it appeared in *Journal of the African Society*, xxiii, 89, (October) pp. 30-38.

The first grammar of Idoma appeared in 1935. Captain (later Dr.) R.C. Abraham, then an Assistant District Officer, printed twenty copies of the *Grammar of Otukpo Dialect of Idoma* in bound form (mimeograph). 429 pages long, this text was revised and edited. This second edition was published for the Idoma Native Authority in 1954 (this time, 114 copies were produced). The text "contains extensive word lists, hundreds of proverbs and a Chrestomathy in addition to the Grammar. The books was republished by the University of London Press (1967). "Abraham's orthography is essentially linguistic" (Armstrong n.d.) - adopting the International Phonetic Alphabet of the International Phonetic Association.

In December 1950, Robert G. Armstrong (later Research Professor of Linguistics at the University of Ibadan's African Studies Institute) came on a fellowship to study Idoma language and culture. He concentrated on the Otukpo Dialect - which he called Central Dialect of Idoma "using the word "central" in a purely geographical sense'. He also did considerable work on the dialect of Igumale and Agila - which he referred to as Southern Dialect. His full-scale dictionary of Idoma was "now substantially complete in a card-file" by the time of his death. Professor Armstrong has presented a synopsis of his writings on Idoma. In his words:

> Professor Armstrong has published the traditional alekwu-text of Onugbo M'loko in *Black Orpheus* (1988) as well as the complete texts of the Icica songs and The Great Ceremony (Uculo Nehi) as performed and recorded by the late Edigwu as well as the article "Talking Instruments in West Africa" in Sebeok (1976), II, pp.864-877.

In 1970 the Methodist Mission made another stride, publishing Eke Eipe, a translation of the New Testament. By the 1960's the Methodist Mission at Ika undertook the study of the Agatu Dialect (or Northern Dialect) under the leadership of Rev. Hugh Mackay. Mackay was succeeded by Mr. Spencer Dibble - both men built on the work done previously by Col. Dibble.

Mr. Joseph Oblete has published a primer, Okpa Oje K'Idoma and a teacher's guide, Onwonwu Okp'Idoma. mr. Isaac Onyejefu Ochinyabo ran a monthly newspaper, "Onyata" after 1953.

3.2.4 Scientific Description

Armstrong's "Current alphabets" matched by their corresponding phonetic symbols. Reproduced from R.G. Armstrong, "Idoma Orthography", n.d.).

Ortography	**Phonetic sign**	**Examples**
a	[a]	ada 'father'
b	[b]	*abɔ̄ 'hand, arm'*
bl	[b̲l]	bla-bla (fire) burns hot; oblete
c = ch	[ts] or [c]	*(ɔ̄cɛ=ɔ̄chɛ 'person'*
d	[d]	*ɔda 'thing'*
dr	[d̲r]	andriitete 'wild alligator pepper'
e	[e]	eje 'beans'
ɛ=e	[ɛ]	*ɛjɛ* = eje 'leopard'

f	[fl]	*aflɛyi 'first'*
g	[g]	*ā́gā́ 'axe'*
gb	[gb]	*ɛ̄́gbā́ 'tribute'*
gw	g^w	gwa 'to drink'
h	[h]	*ihɔ 'sacred, taboo'*
i	[i]	*ī́hī́ 'cloth'*
j	[dz] or [j]	*aɛ* 'land'
k	[k]	*ɔkɔ* 'throat'
kp	[kp]	ikpo 'leg, foot'
kpl	[kpl]	*kpl̄ī́gī́dī́ī́* 'all, completely'
kw	[k^w]	*ɔkwɛ̄́i* 'truth'
kwl	[kwl]	kwlukwuu 'barrel-chested'
l	[l]	ala 'sheep'; aklle 'toad'
m	[m]	umu 'flour'
ml	[ml]	mlanyi 'forget'
n	[n]	*ɛnɛ* 'four'

ny	[n]	*ɔnya* 'woman'
ŋ=ng=-n		*ɔnaji=ɔgaji* 'western rainbow'
		m pon = m pon 'I didn't hear'
ng = ngg	[ng]	*ɔkanga* = *ɔkangg* 'bass drum'
nl = nl	[nl]	nlonlo = nlonlo = nlo-nlo 'tight'
nw = nw	[nw]	onwonwu = onwonwu 'teacher'
nm = nm	[nm]	*ɛnmɛkola'ɛnmɛ*
o	[o]	ododo 'flower'
ɔ=o	[ɔ]	*ɔkɔ=oko 'boat'*
p	[p]	po 'hear'
pl	[pl]	ple 'a little bit'
(r)	[r] (S. Idoma)	(akere 'toad)
s	[s]	sugwu = higbu 'because'
(sh)	[s] (Keana)	
t	[t]	*ɛtɛ 'pot'*
tr = tl	[tr]=[tl]	trunyaa = tlinyaa 'confused'

(ts)	[ts] (S. Idoma)	(ɔ̄tɛ 'person'
u	[u]	ūpū 'forest'
w	[w]	ɛ̄wā 'knife'
wl	[w̲l]	wlewlewlewle (afia) 'in thin strips'
y	[y]	ɔya 'friend'
(z)	[z] (S.Idoma)	(azi 'egg')

alphabet	**phonetic sign**
a	a:
b	b
gb	
d	d
e	ə
ē	ə, ɜ:
f	f
g	g
h	h
i	I:
j	

k	k
l	l
m	m
n	n
ng	n
o	ɔ, ɔ:
o	
p	p
kp	
r	r
s	s
t	t

There are two ways to show diacritic marks: above the alphabet (as in e - efu meaning firewood, efu meaning a hill/mountain); or below (as in o - okpa meaning book, brook, stream, rivulet, river, skin/hide).

> Idoma has a three tone-level discrete register tone system without downdrift or downstep except in the Southernmost dialect, Yala of Ikom, on the Cross River... There are a great many sets of words which differ only by tone but which have quite different meanings. (Armstrong:" n.d. p. 13).

Examples

(a)	ene	-	mother
	ene	-	yesterday
	ene	-	sasswood poison

(b) oko	-	Goat, canoe, punt
oko	-	throat
oko	-	cough
oko	-	beak (OF A BIRD)
(C) Ona	-	NAME OF A VILLAGE
ONA	-	DREAM
ona	-	foufou
ona	-	magic

Phonemic description

Of the alphabets presented above, the following are vowels a, e, e, i , o , o , u ; the remaining are consonant clusters. Consonants occur as in obla (antelope). The following phonemes which on their facevalue look like consonants are not, however: gb , ng = ŋ , kp , ch = ts , kw = k , ny , mn.

4. Language politics in practice

4.1 Government and administration

Governments the world over have often imposed a language (usually that of the dominant group) as language of administration or official language. This may not coincide with the language of day-to-day communication on the one hand, and that of wider communication on the other. In England, French was imposed as language of the courts, of

education and of bureaucracy. In Nigeria Kanuri was imposed on the So; Jukun on the Wukari (Kwararafa Kingdom); Nupe on Bida Emirate; Yoba on Oyo kingdom; Edo on Benin kingdom; Efik on Ibibio tribes; and Fulbe on Fombina (Adamawa which included Cameroun).

This was the picture before 1900.. In the Hausa city states and later in the Fulbe Caliphate of Sokoto, Kanuri was the spoken language of government, while official written correspondence was carried on in Arabic. Later Hausa was introduced as language of spoken administration, while Arabic remained in written official correspondence. During colonial rule, Hausa was used as co-official language with English in the North. In the South, it was English.

Idoma was the official language of administration in the Idoma Native Authorityu, Customary Courts (Judiciary) during colonial era.

4.1.1 The Choice of Language at each Level: national, regional, local.

Three factors influence government policies regarding choice of language in administration.

(a) Functional criterion

Based on this criterion Nigerian languages are classified into:-

i) Major languages: Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba

ii) Regional languages: Edo, Efik, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Idoma, Igala, Igbirra, Ijo, Nupe, Tiv.

iii) Minority languages: Numbering over 380 local languages.

b) Number of Speakers - demographic criterion

i) Languages spoken by over 10m people:

Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba - the 3 major languages.

ii) Languages spoken by over 1m people:

Edo, Efik, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Idoma, Igala, Igbira, Ijo, Nupe, Tiv - the 10 regional languages.

iii) Languages spoken by 100,000 people:

The MINOR languages.

iv) The MINORITY languages.

c) Political criterion

This has always been determined by the political structure - Protectorate, Regional Administration, State structure and local government. Today, Nigeria has a three--tier structure of governmental administration:

Central government (or Federal)

State

Local government

The corresponding languages of each tier of government are as follows:

i) National Languages: used in federal bureaucracy, judiciary, legislature and education.

These are the major languages - Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

ii) State languages: used in state government administration, judiciary, legislature and education. In Benue state English is used in these domains; thus Tiv and Idoma, the dominant languages in the state are not state languages in this sense ipso stricto.

iii) Local or Community languages: used in local government administration, judiciary, legislature and education.

In the old Idoma Native Authority, Idoma language (central Idoma dialect) was the official language of administration, judiciary, legislature and education. Today, Idoma performs this role in Otukpo, Apa, Okpokwu, and Ado local government areas. Igede is nowadays employed in Ito, Oju and Workwu Local Government Areas. But Ufia and Akpa are not used in local government administration.

4.1.2 The choice of Language in Political Bodies: Cabinet, Parliament, Political Parties and Movements, Statutory Organisations.

This reflects the pattern noted in 4.1.1. At the level of State government administration, the State Executive (Cabinet) meetings are conducted in English. Minutes of such meetings and official records and proceedings of parliament (State House of Assembly), political parties (e.g. rallies) and Statutory Boards are kept in English. At the Local Government level, the Exco, Parliament (Legislature) conduct its business in Idoma.

So also are court proceedings at the Customary (or Area) courts. However, records are kept in English, so are judgements. Customary Law is written in English. In the state High Courts and Magistrate Courts, proceedings are conducted in English (with interpreters where necessary): charges are read in English, pleas are taken in English. Political rallies and meetings of political movements are carried on in Idoma, but minutes are kept in English - at the LGA level for effective popular grassroots participation.

4.1.3 Security forces: language use and language services

At the State Police Command warrants of arrest, charge book, the penal (criminal law) code, orderly room instructions, desk register for complaints etc. are in English. The language of the force - training, drills, prosecution in a court of law - is English.

At the LGA level, it is the local or community language. In the former Idoma Native Authority, the N.A. Police Force (Okloho or Idanduka) was instructed in Idoma. Training, including drills, was carried on in Idoma, orders were barked out in Idoma, so was prosecution (charges were read in Idoma, pleas were taken in Idoma, judgement was delivered in Idoma). Today, the LGA (successor to the N.A. does not have its own Police Force. However, care is taken to ensure that servicemen are posted/deployed to their LGA's. Since most men in the service of the LGA are either retired army men (who enlisted by transferring their services) or N.A. Police convertees (on abolition of the N.A. Police Force, servicemen were given the option to convert or to retire), enough servicemen are ensured for the L.G.A's.

4.1.4 Health Services: Hospitals, Clinics.

In state-run hospitals English remains the dominant language in use. Doctor-patient interview (examination and diagnosis) is done in English, prescriptions are English, labels on drugs are in English. However, where necessary there are interpreters - standing between doctor-patient, and in pharmacies to give directions for use of medicines.

In Rural Health Clinics run by local governments the community language is used in the domains listed above. Patient-doctor interviews are conducted in Idoma. However, required tests, diagnosis, prescriptions and drug labels are English. Again here, there are interpreters.

4.2 Judiciary System.

There are two types of courts. At the state level, we have High Courts and Magistrate courts. At the local government level there are Customary or Area Courts. For language use in this domain see 3.3.2 "Judiciary System" under 3.2 Language Policies.

4.3 Education

4.3.1 Medium of Instructions at each Educational Level (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and in each region)

Idoma has been and is still used in mass literacy (functional literacy, to be more precise) and informal education. It is also a school subject on the curriculum.

In the early 1950's and throughout the 1960's, Idoma was used as medium of instruction in adult literacy classes. Texts in use then included:

a) Ka L'uwa - a primer

b) Aluka - Basic Arithmetic

Later, adult literacy programme was transformed into functional literacy as literacy became increasingly recognized in mass participation and democracy. Again, the medium of instruction was Idoma. Teachers were trained specially for these, and were awarded Adult Literacy Teacher Certificates.

Idoma was also introduced as medium of instruction in early primary education - from pre-primary classes (Nursery/Kindergarten) to Standard one (nowadays class II). All school subjects are thus taught in the language throughout Idoma Native Authority then, and today in Otukpo, Apa, Okpokwu and Ado Local Government Areas of Benue State. This is in line with the Ford Foundation recommendation of 1966; and the tenets of the National Policy on Education (1976, revised 1981)

These emphasized mother tongue in early education grades of the primary school.

However, Idoma has never been taught as a subject in schools beyond early primary education. This has had a negative effect on its development. Today, however, it is studied at the state-owned College of Education in Katsina Alla, and the State-run Benue State University, Makurdi in the Department of Linguistics.

4.3.2 Languages as School Subject

Beyond early primary education, Idoma is yet to be introduced as a school subject in Schools. This raises the issue of the implementation of the National policy on Education. If indeed a "child learns faster and better in his mother tongue" (the slogan of apologists of mother tongue medium) then attention ought to be paid to the development of the language for use in education. In other words, the language must be standardized: orhtography developed, dictionary and grammar produced, teachers trained. Also Idoma is both the mother tongue in Idoma land and the language of the immediate community in Akpa, Utonkon and Igede areas. This makes it the medium of instruction as enshrined in the NPE.

4.3.3 Idoma Numerals, alphabet system, cathecism/Religious instruction, singing, and story-telling.

Texts include: *Ka L'uwa* and *Aluka.*

4.3.4. Text books and reading materials.

Dibble, Rev. Spencer

Various Bible translations and hymns in the Agatu dialect. Ika, Benue State. (ca. 1960).

Mackay, Rev. Hugh

Idoma (Agatu Dialect). Unpublished Swedish word list (200 words) presented to the West African language survey. Ika: Protestant Mission (1960).

Norcross, Rev.

Translations of the Gospel of Mark and The Acts of the Apostles. Idoma primer..

Oblete, Joseph Onka

Okpa Oje K'Idoma, Year 1. A first reading book.

Ibadan: Abiprint Books (1979). Onwoanwu Okp'Idoma

Teachers Guide Years 1 - 6. Ibadan: Abiprint Books (1979).

Achingabo, Isaac Onyejefu Onyata

Newspaper, monthly.

Otukpo: Idoma N.A.

Ka l'Uwa Idoma Reader

Aluka Arithmetic Course Book

Amali, Samson O.O.

Onugbo M'loko and *The leaders*

Ibadan: University of Ibadan

Adela, Ohe (The Witch) and *Emie* (The Famine)

Jos: University of Jos.

Odegwudegwu and *Inquest Performances of the*

Idoma

Frankfurt: Franz Steiner Press, Weisbaden.

Worlds within Worlds and Other Poems.

Ibadan: University of Ibadan (1970).

The Nigerian Dreams and Realities: A Bilingual

Play in Idoma and English. Occasional Publication No. 1, Jos (1985).

Armstrong, Robert G.

Onugbo M/Oko Story in Idoma Ancestral Mask Chant Ibadan: The Institute of African Studies, 1968. The Idoma Verb Actes Du Second Collogue Internationale De Linguistique Negro-Africaine Dakar: 12 - 16 April, 1962.

"The Idomoid languages of the Benue and Crosss River Valleys". *Journal of West African Languages* xiii, 1

(1983). "Idoma Orthography" mimeo (n.d.)

4.3.5 Teacher Training

Specialist Teachers are trained in Idoma for functional and adult educators. Teaching Certificates are awarded

4.4 Science and Technology.

4.4.1 The language of research in government agencies, Universities, Private enterprises.

The language of research in government agencies such as parastatals, government owned companies and private enterprises is English. English is also the language of business in these concerns especially of international trade, medium-scale as well as large-scale private enterprises. However, an English-based pidgin (Nigerian Pidgin) is also gaining currency in theses domains. This is the picture at the state level: in Makurdi, the Benue state capital and in Otukpo and Gboko - the two large, industrial/commercial centres.

At the Local Government level, the picture is similar; but instead of pidgin, Idoma is the language of commercial enterprise as well as lingua *franca*. In the rural areas, the language is Idoma; or English with interpreters and translators assisting as middle men. In the trade domain (private enterprise) in the rural areas, the language of bargaining or haggling is Idoma.

4.4.2 Language Agencies (academics, committees for standardization, language commissions)

The Bible Translation Trust, located in Jos, continues to handle most research issues on Idoma language: Standardizing orthographies, developing dictionaries, producing primers and grammar. For example, two orthographic systems, the one developed by the Methodist Mission and modelled on an English-spelling system (developed by the Rev. Norcross and based on Igumale or Southern dialect), the other developed by the Roman Catholic Mission and adopting the symbols of the International Phonetic Association, are current. For example work done so far on Agatu dialect use the English writing system, whereas publications on the Central or Otukpo dialect use the international phonetic alphabet. Also translations of the bible and hymnals are in the English spelling system. This controversy needs to be resolved, and the orthography harmonized.

In addition, the Department of Nigerian Languages, a Unit of the Language Development Centre, Nigerian Educational Research and Development Centre, Sheda-Abuja is doing magnificent work on Idoma and other local languages.

Together, these agencies - Nigerian Educational Research and Development Centre and the Bible Translation Trust act as Agencies, Committees and Commissions undertaking research into, and collating, monitoring and harmonizing all work on Idoma.

4.4.3. Terminological and Lexicographical Organization.

Such functions are, for now, the responsibility of the two agencies mentioned in 4.4.2 above. Though its primary aim is Bible translation and the production of hymnals and other publications of a religious nature, the Bible Translation Trust undertakes researches into the standardization of Idoma language.

4.5. Religion

4.5.1 Language in Various religious Denominations

Hitherto, the language of evangelization in the Christian Missions was English; traditional religious worshippers shopped for converts in Idoma. Then the Christian Missions began to establish schools. As often acknowledged, the Voluntary Agency Schools carried the Bible in one hand and western education on the other. The aim was to produce Cathecists for indoctrination and interpreters to preach the gospel. Many Theological and/or Bible Schools were thus established.

Today, the language of proselytization in the idoma-speaking Local Government Authorities is Idoma, the vernacular. Apostles of traditional religion still do the work of evangelization in Idoma.

4.5.2 Language use in Religious services, community activities, schools, Youth Organizations, Women's Clubs.

Up until the fifties and sixties, English was the language of Christian religious worship. Church services were conducted in English, the homily (or sermon) was delivered in English - and translated in summary for the parishioners who were largely uneducated. In the Roman Catholic Churches at the time, the mass was conducted in Latin, while the

sermon was preached in English. It was then summarised in Idoma.

The picture changed from about the mid-seventies. Today both the service (mass) and homily are in Idoma in the Idoma-speaking areas. In the State capital, there are special Sunday Services in English and the two State languages - Tiv and Idoma. Parishioners can therefore attend a service of their choice.

Public functions such as community activities, (harvest, thanksgiving and barzar), meetings of youth clubs (choir, Young Christian Association, Church societies - Block Rosary, Charismatic Revenewal, Bible study group) and women's clubs (e.g. Zumunta Mata, Christian Mothers, Catholic Women Organization) are conducted in Idoma. In the state capital and at Otukpo - an urban centre with linguistically heteroge-nous population, formal church functions (such as the activities listed above) are conducted in English. Translation in however provided. In the Idoma speaking areas, such activities are done in Idoma; however records and minutes of meetings are kept in English.

4.5.3 The language of Bible translation and religious documents.

4.6 Trade and Industry

4.6.1 The language used in Federal Chambers of Commerce and Industry

4.6.2 Trade Unions: Languages used in internal Organizations, Councils, Publications.

This depends on the relevant tier of government at the federal level, it is English; at the state level, again it is English (but co-functional in some areas with the respective state language). This applies to the monolingual states like Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Imo, Enugu, Abia, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Lagos States. At the local government level, it is the community language.

Irrespective of the level however, English remains the language used in most publications.

Idoma is the language in use in the Idoma - speaking areas.

4.6.3. Language(s) used in the work-place at various level: Management to foremen, foremen to workers, workers amongst themselves; use of workers' pidgins.

The language (bureaucratese) used in formal official communication in both state and local government administration is ENGLISH. This is in keeping with the provisions of the 1979 and 1989 constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which give English the status of official language. This is in employer-to- employee interactional discourse.

However, the situation is more complex with respect to interaction at the lower levels. In written official communication - foremen to workers, workers amongst themselves the medium is English. However, in spoken discourse (albeit official) the language is Idoma. Most non-formal (unofficial) discourse takes place in Idoma. Sometimes code switching, and often code-mixing in Idoma and English takes place. In Otukpo, an urban settlement, Nigerian pidgin is becoming common in such domain - given its multilingual composition.

An incipient workers' pidgin - a hardening or crystallization of the code-switching habit amongst workmen - may be emerging. This may get re-inforced with time.

4.6.4 International and Supra-regional trade.

English continues to be the medium of interaction in this domain, at least in official correspondence. Idoma is limited to the unofficial, informal setting.

4.7 Cultural life and arts.

The Idoma have a rich cultural heritage. This is to be found in the various festivities: Eje Alekwu, Inquest performances and funeral rites, naming ceremony, the annual hunting expedition and its rites (Ote o ta) including the annual fishing expedition (enyi o wu). Blacksmithing, cloth weaving, basket making and pottery are part of this rich heritage.

4.7.1 Oral Literature and Folklore

Dr. Steve Abah of Ahmadu Bello University has done a beautiful work (at the Masters level) on the "Story-Telling (Ocha o cha) performances of the Idoma-speaking peoples. These are tales told by moonlight. Ms Enode Odumuh (now Mrs. Abah) has done a B.A. dissertation on the oral folktale of the Idoma (for the University of Calabar). Hers is a collection of tales, riddles, jokes, tongue twisters etc. and their socializing (educational) function. Dr. Ode Ogede looked at "Oral Poetry among the Igede" at a Masters Level (A.B.U., 1982) where he considers the war songs, hunters' incantations, divinations before the Oracle, funeral dirges, lullabies, Odes, love songs and musical performances.
Dr. Emmanuel Amali (of the University of Maiduguri) has recently completed a Ph.D. dissertation on the Oral Poetry of the Central Idoma (Otukpo perple) (Unijos, 1993). Prof. Samson Amali and late Prof. Robert Armstrong have beautiful text collections together with tape recordings (a chrestomathy) of the major oral traditions of the Idoma including Ikpelokwu Oka (Inquest), Uculo Nehi (funeral rites), alekwu masquerade chants etc.

The language use to service these traditional domains is Idoma. As the Idoma say, "the Alekwu does not speak English". You may add, nor does echi (the oracle and traditional religious worship)

4.7.2. The languages of the theatre, musical performances, art exhibitions.

According to Dr. Steve Abah, (M.A. Ibid), Prof. Samson Amali and Prof. Robert Armstrong, both the story - telling culture, the Inquest performances, the Alekwu chants and (Ochulo) funeral rite performances are theatrical pieces. They form part of the rich performance tradition of the Idoma. The medium for such traditional exhibitions is Idoma.

The Idoma has a rich store of music: these are graded according age; and they are also sex - specific. Male - adults have Odumuh, Ichahoho, Oglinye, Alekwu; Youngmen have Klobu, Aja, Ibo (Stilt masquerade dance festival), Onyonkpo, Egbo, Idadu. Old women have Ichicha; Young women have Ogala, Odongoli, Igbogidfigbo, Odugba, Aja, Oshobo and Olenyalaje. Children and adolescents (male and female - mixed performances) have Ikidiki-dimi and Okpa Klo, Klo, Klo (hide and seek). The language of these musical performances is Idoma.

The defunct Idoma Native Authority used to organize annual art exhibitions. These were competitions at which prizes were won. This has now been taken over by the Idoma Cultural Day (usually December 26) - a day set aside for the display of Idoma culture including art exhibitions. Again, the language use to service this domain is Idoma.

4.7.3 The language of publications.

Onyata, the only Idoma newspaper (a monthly) was printed in Idoma. It has ceased to exist. Translations of the Bible and hymnals exist in Idoma; so are catechism books and other guides or religious instruction manuals.

Materials for adult literacy e.g. Ka l'uwa and Aluka are printed in Idoma.

Most published works are still in English.

4.7.3.1 Fiction: Literature and trivial writing.

generally, in English

4.7.3.2 Non-fiction : Scientific, technical and general books.

English

4.8 Media

4.8.1 Radio: International, National, Regional and Broadcasts.

FRCN's (Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria) "Voice of Nigeria" broadcasts international and national news (Network) in English, Translations (in summary) were then provided for the major highlights of the national news in nine Nigerian languages (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Kanuri, Edo, Efik, Tiv, Idoma and Igala). Today the national news is translated in 25 languages including Idoma. Radio Kaduna, during the administration of the Regional Government, used to broadcast news translations in Hausa and Idoma. There were programmes run in Idoma by Mr. Adama Ajonye (anchored).

The State news (Benue State) is broadcast in English, with translations in Tiv and Idoma. Specific air-time is devoted to Idoma programmes daily.

4.8.2 Television.

4.8.2.1 Public and private networks.

Private T.V. transmission is yet to take off in Nigeria (albeit licences have been granted for commencement).

The state T.V. Station, NTA Makurdi, broadcasts State news in English, with Summaries in Tiv and Idoma. In addition, air time is provided for programmes in Idoma.

4.8.2.2 The language used in news bulletins, documentaries, sports, advertising, serials etc.

The language of documentaries is the "Vernacular" - Tiv and Idoma (with English footage). However, the language of sports, bulletins, serials and advertising is English.

4.8.3 Newspapers and journals: International, National, Regional, Locals; Protest Papers.

Newspapers, news magazines, journals at all levels are printed in English.

4.9 Sports and Leisure

4.9.1 The language used in sports and leisure organizations

Commentary is run in English. However, in the language of the playground (leisure, relaxation, exercise) is Idoma. Drills and training (in sports and exercise science) are in English.

4.9.2 The language used in practising sports

English in formal settings, and Idoma in private domains.

4.9.3 The language of spectators

Idoma generally with occasional code-switching/mixing into English.

4.10 Local Markets and domestic service

At Otukpo, a heterogenous community due to its cosmopolitan nature, the language used in the market place is English. This is the picture in Otukpo town only. Here too, the language of the home in mixed marriages is English. In certain homes (also in Otukpo town) where domestic servants are hired, the language may be English or Idoma depending on the

linguistic background of the master/servant.

Otherwise in local markets (and this includes the outlying villages, the outskirts of Otukpo metropolis) the commercial lingua franca is Idoma. In the headquarters of the four other local government councils, except Otukpo (Apa with headquarters at Bopo; Okpokwu, headquarters at Edumoga; Ado, Igumale; and Ogbadibo with its headquarters at Otukpa) the language of trade is Idoma. In Oju local government council, Igede (one of the Idomoid languages) is used. However, in Akpa (part of Otukpo L.G.A) and Utonkon (part of Ado LGA), Akpa and Ufia are used respectively as commercial lingua franca.

4.11 Family and friendship networks

A network of relationships exist among the Idoma: friends, friends-of-friends, neighbours (friendship network). For the Idoma, a family is not a primary unit, it includes both sanguinal (even extended family) and conjugal relations.

In the culture of the Idoma, ikpo ne le y'ema a (you have to visit to sustain a relationship, sanguinal or conjugal). Such visits are spiced with conversations. The pattern of language used here is similar to that in 4.10 above. In Otukpo town, the languages in use are Idoma or English depending on the linguistic background of the interlocutors. Sometimes, (only among the literate) the topic of discourse determines whether Idoma or English is appropriate. Codeswitching and/or mixing in also common here.

In the rural areas, generally Idoma is used. Sometimes (among students on holidays) English may be used. Akpa, Igede and Ufia are used in their respective locales (see 4.10).

5. Language attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes.

5.1 Perceptions of language policies by people, e.g. is language policy perceived as manipulative, exploitive etc.

Elsewhere (Odumuh 1994 a,b) we attempted to sketch attitudes to the National Policy on Education (1977, 1981) as it affects language(s) of instruction at all levels of education, and the National Language Policy as enshrined in The 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. With respect to the implementation of the former (the prescription which makes the language of the immediate environment or Mother Tongue the educational lingua franca), we demonstrated that the minority (State and Community languages) languages were not being encouraged. They are endangered. They are not been developed, teachers are not been trained in these languages nor is a metalanguage being developed for any of them. They still remain mere prescriptions on paper.

The attitude to English as contained in Articles 51 and 91 of the 1979 Constitution are positively received by the minorities (according to our findings). The attempt to introduce the national languages (Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo - the so-called major languages) is seen as an imposition, an attempt to replace one foreign language, English with three equally foreign languages. The reaction of Dr. Emmanuel Adegbija of the University of Ilorin to other reactions to Mr. David Jowitt's paper at the British Council's 50th anniversary celebration in Ibadan last year summarizes the feelings of minorities to the attempt to introduce the major languages as National Languages.

5.2 Attitudes to present official language.

English is positively received among the Idomas as official language. It is felt that the present status of English ought to remain unchanged. Moreover the language is

domesticated already.

However, it is also felt that while retaining English, Idoma ought to be developed.

5.3 Attitudes to future potential official languages.

Negative (see 5.1 above). As enshrined in Article 51 of the 1979 Constitution, the potential official languages are the three major languages - Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The Idomas see Hausa as the language of Islam and language of the Hausa - Fulani Oligarchy. These are therefore languages of domination and imposition. Igbo is viewed as a language of economic exploitation. Economic life in Idoma land has always been dominated by Ibo-speaking peoples. Yoruba is foreign.

5.4 Attitudes to standard languages and their non-standard varieties.

Speakers of central Idoma (i.e Otukpo dialect) refer to speakers of Western Idoma (Edumoga dialect) as "a la la". Western Idoma is distinguished by a la (equivalent to Central Idoma "a" meaning "them", "other"). This is said to be the source of this acronym - which has become a standard term of reference (albeit derogatory) for speakers of Western dialect. Similarly, speakers of Southern Idoma (Igumale dialect) are referred to "efu na ano cha" = we are victims of war i.e. refugees). This term of reference originated during the Nigerian civil war, Southern Idoma, being the closest neighbours to the Igbos were the first casualties of the hostilities. Refugees who moved to Otukpo attributed their exodus to the war. Finally, speakers of Agatu dialect refer to speakers of Central Idoma as Akpoto, and vice versa. (see Akpoto phenomenon).

Otherwise Central dialect is accepted as "standard" Idoma.

5.5 Attitudes to prescriptivism and purism.

Idomas jealously guard their tongue and are keen to preserve it from corruption and decay. However, there are encroachments from English (due to education) and modernization generally. For example, code mixing has become common place among the illiterate (it carries prestige), and in science and technology - as a widow to the world.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Language loyalties, language preferences, codeswitching, diglossia, multilingualism, language shift, language maintenance, language death/loss; Implications of the country's language policy for: administration, government, education, social and economic development, political development.

The various state creation exercises in Nigeria since independence has demonstrated a gradual reversion to ethno-territorial principles. The feeling or thinking in government circles is that perhaps it is the best way to reflect the realities of the grass roots. In 1975 government had issued a White paper categorically rejecting the "creation of state on ethnic lines, because of concern... for the stability and unity of the country". However, in spite of this, subsequent pressures forced the government to create a series of states on ethnolinguistic lines (six in 1976, two more in 1989, and again nine in 1991). Thus:

> It can be said that whereas the original four regions and later twelve States satisfied only those who spoke Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, the current administrative divisions also try to advance the territorial validity of the 'network' languages. There has thus been a clear movement towards the re-presentation of ethno-linguistic units (Brann, 1993:640).

Besides, the Nigeria's administrative structure of federal, state and local government has "set the stage for the real representation of territorial interests". Nigeria's heterogeneity has not just been a blessing: the various ethnolinguistic units have always clamoured for fair

representation and a share of the national cake. In the past, this was articulated in the various demands for creation of states based on ethno-linguistic criterion. The theme of this year's preconstitutional Conference organized by the Middle Belt Forum in Jos clearly summarized such desires. Entitled "The Middle Belt Minorities and the Equity Question in Nigeria" the conference sought to drum home the point that the minorities are marganized in the scheme of things. In a Communique at the end of its deliberations, it called for the abrogation of state structure, and the consolidation of the local government authorities - emphasis on the third tier of governmental administration. Local Government Councils are a result of government's efforts to bring government closer to the people grassroots democracy. This is government's response to the demands for administrative units based on ethno-linguistic lines.

Finally, politics of the third republic has been dominated by one theme: "grassroots democracy". The totality of these has been increased awareness, (on the part of Nigerian rural masses), and a sense of belonging to primordial roots. The validity of ethno-linguistic territoriality is thus no longer in doubt. This feeling was rekindled in the creation of "Kebbi State for the Gwandu emirate; of Yobe for ancient-Seyfawa; of Edo for ancient Benin Kingdom; and of Adamawa State (in August, 1991) in addition to States that were created in 1976 linked to traditional kingdoms, Bauchi, Borno, Kano, Oyo and Sokoto".

Ethno-linguistic territoriality is most manifest in the feelings of Nigerians towards their language, and in comparison, to other Nigerian languages. This linguistic cum cultural stereotype is best reflected in the National Question or Debate.

It is within this National Question that the National Language Question must be located.

> What the Country (Nigeria) has at present is a national policy on language in education which assigns a role to English as the medium of instruction within the national system of education from the fourth year of a six-year primary education onwards;

> and a clause in the current constitution which recognizes each of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as additional language of business in the federal legislature besides English, as soon as necessary arrangements can be made to that effect. (Banjo, 1993).

As Banjo is quick to point out Nigeria has no language policy, what she has is language practice. Besides "English continues to be the country's official language and increasingly, also the national lingua franca". In the vexed debate about a national language, Nigerians have continued to be divided. There are three camps: (1) exponents of English; (2) those who favour a major language; and (3) proponents of a minority language (Odumuh 1987, 1990). The most recent call in support of English's candidature was by Mr. David Jowitt of Bayero University, Kano. Prof. Ayo Bamgbose has continued to insist on the adoption of one of the major languages. What emerges from the protective attitude of Nigerians to their language?.

The Idomas have consistently demonstrated this attitude. In the very assertive regionalization drive (called balkanization) embarked upon by the Sardauna of Sokoto and first Premier of Northern Region in the first Republic, the Idomas resisted every attempt to be islamized, and/or adopt Hausa language. (The Jihadist war before then did not reach Idomaland). Even when Hausa was made the language of the civil service, and the language of business (in addition to English) in the Northern legislature, they refused to learn Hausa. This was demonstrated again when Idomas were placed in Benue Plateau State when states were first created in 1967. The phletora of fora across the country ensure this: Ujo K' Idoma, Idoma Forum, Idoma Youth Forum and Opia toha.

What I have said in the proceeding paragraph relates to the functional (load) distribution of the various languages in Nigeria - local and foreign - at the various levels of governance and in various domains of use. The central question to be thus addressed is:

What do we do with these languages? English functions in officialese and formal occasions, Nigerian pidgin is gaining currency as a lingua franco, the three major Nigerian languages are being promoted in a triglossia. What happens to the minority languages?

The changing administrative structure of the country over the years has had implications for language policy, planning and use. Different periods are identifiable in the restructuring of this administrative landscape: the "Colonies", the Regional structure and the states, frameworks.

The restructuring of the country into 3 regions following the Richards Constitution (1947 - 67) - North, East and West - produced three dominant socio-political groups: the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Igbo-speaking group in the East, and the Yorubas in the West.

Whereas 19th - C Islamic administration in the North imposed the language of the dominant ethnic groups - Fulfulde, Hausa and Kanuri, - colonial administration evolved a dual poplicy. While indirect rule encouraged the status quo ante; direct rule through the creation of provinces, divisions and districts (ethno-linguistic units) encouraged state languages. The former used lingua fracas in administration, the latter minor languages.

This duality has characterized Nigeria's language policy, planning and practice ever since. The protectorates (+ Lagos Colony) gave way to a regional structure (3 up to 1964 when Mid-West was added). In 1967, a (12) state structure was established to replace regional structure (they numbered 19 in 1976). Then from 1976 a third-tier of governmental administration was introduced. Today there are about 500 Locasl Government Areas - each with its unique language of government/administration. For example, the division into twelve states in 1967 gave prominence to Efik and Ijo in South - East and Rivers States, whilst that into 19 in 1976 enhanced the status of Kanuri in Borno; Fulfulde in Gongola; Tiv,

Igala, Idoma in Benue State; and Nupe in Niger State. These became state languages. This position was given legal (official) backing in the 1979 Constitution (ref. Article 91). Each State legislature was free to choose an indigenous state language as language for its proceedings in the House in addition to English. As it turned out, Benue, Plateau, Kwara preferred English only, Borno chose Kanuri in addition to English, Gongola rejected Fulfulde, in Imo and Anambra though Igbo was recognized de jure, de fact English only was used as sole language of business. Rivers, Cross Rivers and Bendel voted for English only for business.

Pluralism (both cultural and linguistic) must not just be recognized but accepted as a way of life with us. As Chinua Achebe has expressed it, "let everyone bring his gifts" (cultures and languages) to God's altar; and Nigeria will be the richer for the diversity of the harvest". What is required in order to manage this plural situation is a multi lingual language policy. What we have today is a TRIGLOSSIC language practice with English as officialese/bnureacratese; Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as languages of state administration (including the judiciary and legislature); and community languages serving similar functions in local government administration.

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